**LINKED - *Leveraging Innovation for a Network of Knowledge on Education***

**Task on existing online brokerage platforms**

Analysis by University of Helsinki

Minna Lakkala, minna.lakkala@helsinki.fi

*A comment from Minna*: I apologize for having evaluated only three brokerage systems although the assignment was to evaluate four. I skimmed through the evaluations made by two other partners; they had already evaluated all other links that we got, and I do not have much more to add to their work. I do not currently know any other brokerage systems that could be useful to evaluate but I can evaluate one addition system later if somebody have suggestions about them.

**1. Canadian Health Services Research Foundation (CHSRF)**

**URL Link:** <http://www.chsrf.ca/home_f.php#4>

**Initiator**: Canadian Federal Government

**Main aims:** To bring researchers and decision makers together to create and apply knowledge to improve health services for Canadians.

**Target groups:** Researchers and policy makers

**Outputs:** Various, including : Brokering digest, Promising practices in research use, podcasts, videos etc.

1. What are your impressions of each website in terms of the

* Platform’s usability: i.e. how it is structured, navigation possibilities etc.: *There is a lot of stuff in the portal and it takes some time to figure out what different sections include. There was also a navigation bar showing where you had proceeded yourself. The layout and presentation of menus changes when advancing from the first page to sub-sections which made the orientation to the portal difficult at the beginning.*
* Text on platform: *In most sub-pages there is first an informative description of the content of the section. Sometimes the layout of pages feels messy and there are many elements used (fonts, styles, colours, pictures …).*
* Clarity of description of aims and what they offer: *In the About us section there is a comprehensive body of information about the foundation and its services, but what is misses was a short and clear description of what the* ***portal*** *offers.*
* Organization of access to evidence: *There were resources available in multiple sub-sections, some provided complete original research reports which need more time to get acquainted with, others (especially the Publications and Resources section) included more easy-to-use and interesting summaries. What I liked most where the section “Mythbusters” (research evidence related to conventional myths) and Pass it on! (stories about innovative approaches).*
* Search options available (e.g. simple search/advanced search, keyword search, by pre-defined list of topics etc.): *There was only a global unstructured search option for the whole site.*
* Contact possibilities: *There were good contact possibilities provided, both general phone numbers and email-addresses as well as a staff list in alphabetical order and structured by branches.*
* Links to further information on related websites of interest: *Nothing was mentioned in the front page but in the sub-sections there was a Links section with about 10 sub-sections including links to other related websites. Well-organized section.*

1. a) What is the quality of the written brokerage outputs available (e.g. research reviews): i.e. relevance, accessibility, length, format etc. ? *There were a lot of complete research reports available; it is probably valuable that such reports are made accessible in a centralized way but the user has to be expert in the field to evaluate what is their quality and relevance and how useful the information is. The review summaries are concise and easy to read. In the review summaries, there is always the original publications listed and they seem to have been used following scientific standards.*

b) What is the quality of the audio/visual brokerage outputs available (e.g. podcast interviews, videos): i.e. relevance, accessibility, length, structure, appropriateness etc. ? *There is no such outputs in the site.*

1. a) Which features from these existing brokerage platforms do you think we should use and/or disregard for the LINKED brokerage platform? *The idea of the sections “Mythbusters” (research evidence related to conventional myths) and “Pass it on!” (stories about innovative approaches) could be considered to somehow be applied in the LINKED platform too; a navigation bar.*

b) Please suggest any additional features to be included on the LINKED brokerage platform: *I think that for a new user coming to the site, there should be an easy way to find a description of the site, what it includes and what it offers and for whom. It is not so relevant to first find information about the organization that is responsible of the site.*

**2. Campbell Collaboration (**[**http://www.campbellcollaboration.org**](about:blank)**)**

1. What are your impressions of each website in terms of the

* Platform’s usability: i.e. how it is structured, navigation possibilities etc.: *I liked this site and the library very much. It was simple to use, just essential information included in the pages, and it was easy to navigate. There was also a short user’s guide to use the site (e.g. search and export functionalities)*
* Text on platform : *Easy to read font, just necessary information given, not too long texts.*
* Clarity of description of aims and what they offer: *There was an informative enough description of the organization responsible of the site, its aims and organizational structure. But the description of the site (The Resource Center) as such, was very short and not to be noticed easily. Also the library section did not include any explanation or description.*
* Organization of access to evidence: *There was a hierarchical link list structure in the library, structures according to content categories. It was possible to browse the lists and it felt very easy to use. What especially was informative was that in each level, the number of reviews under each category or sub-category was mentioned in parenthesis after the category title. There was also a list of “Latest documents” and “Most accessed” in the front page of the library.*
* Search options available (e.g. simple search/advanced search, keyword search, by pre-defined list of topics etc.): *The hierarchical category list as such was easy to use for browsing. There was also an advanced search functionality available where you could combine search words and other options. It was also possible to save your search history.*
* Contact possibilities : *There was info about general contact possibilities as well as contact possibilities directly to coordination groups/persons responsible for specific themes. It was also possible to send one’s own “Burning questions” through a web form. In addition, it was possible to subscribe to their newsletter.*
* Links to further information on related websites of interest: *There was no links to further information of other websites.*

1. a) What is the quality of the written brokerage outputs available (e.g. research reviews): i.e. relevance, accessibility, length, format etc. ? *The reviews were made following a strict and systematic protocol which was also explicitly described in each review (search strategy, selection criteria etc.) in a transparent way. Also all original publications that had been used were listed in the reviews. The reviews gave an impression that they has been made in a very professional and scientifically sound way. But it is not sure how easily teachers or policy makers can use the reviews, perhaps they were written more for researcers.*

b) What is the quality of the audio/visual brokerage outputs available (e.g. podcast interviews, videos): i.e. relevance, accessibility, length, structure, appropriateness etc. ? *There were no such materials in the site.*

1. a) Which features from these existing brokerage platforms do you think we should use and/or disregard for the LINKED brokerage platform? *Simple and easy-to-use hierarchical and categorized structure of the reviews, informing about the amount of materials by numbers in each sub-section of the library, a possibility to send one’s own “burning questions” via the web, a possibility to subscribe to the newsletter, systematic and transparent review protocol.*

b) Please suggest any additional features to be included on the LINKED brokerage platform: *Should we list in the FICTUP site also those authentic questions that we do not answer now but which could probably been answered later and should we let users suggest new questions?*

**3. Cochrane Library (**[**http://www.thecochranelibrary.com/view/0/index.html**](about:blank)**).**

1. What are your impressions of each website in terms of the

* Platform’s usability: i.e. how it is structured, navigation possibilities etc.: *In general the Cochrane Library felt easy to use, the menus were clear and it was easy to understand what each section includes. The main menu was visible all the time so you could not get lost. There could have been a navigation bar showing where you had proceeded.*
* Text on platform : *Quite small and vague font, a great deal of text in some sub-pages.*
* Clarity of description of aims and what they offer: *Very clear and detailed description of the purpose of the site and methods of making the reviews.*
* Organization of access to evidence : *The review reports were organized under an easy-to-use hierarchical and categorized list, where also the number of resources under each category was visible. There were also multiple options available for using the material: When you opened certain review, you could read the text either as a web-page format, including separate links to sub-sections, or as a pdf-document, and you could get a short, standard or full form of the review. You could also get previous versions of the review. Although the interface in the review page was not very attractive or easy to figure out, the various options offered for viewing each review material was impressive.*
* Search options available (e.g. simple search/advanced search, keyword search, by pre-defined list of topics etc.): *There are both simple and advanced search available and you are able to save your previous searches. There were also search hints offered in the search page.*
* Contact possibilities : *There was a possibility to submit feedback of the materials through a web formula. There was also contact instructions for those who want to make reviews themselves. In addition, it was possible to register as a user of the entire library and there was a customer service that you could contact through email or phone.*
* Links to further information on related websites of interest: *In addition to systematic reviews, there were also other type of scientific articles and publications available in the library database.*

1. a) What is the quality of the written brokerage outputs available (e.g. research reviews): i.e. relevance, accessibility, length, format etc. ? *The reviews were very systematically made and each section of the review document was clearly titled and its focus explicated (e.g. Background, Objectives, Results, Authors' conclusions etc.). The review protocol was made explicit and transparent. The full reviews were very detailed and perhaps targeted for researchers, the summaries are probably more useful for practitioners, including e.g. a “Plain language summary” section. This double strategy is a good idea but requires also much work.*

b) What is the quality of the audio/visual brokerage outputs available (e.g. podcast interviews, videos): i.e. relevance, accessibility, length, structure, appropriateness etc. ? *There were bodcasts and videos attached to some reviews that were listed in the front page under a title “Highlighted new and updated reviews”. It seems that the bodcasts included authors short oral description of the specific review and its results. I would have liked to know how long each bodcast or video was but there was not such information told in the site.*

1. a) Which features from these existing brokerage platforms do you think we should use and/or disregard for the LINKED brokerage platform? *Offering both short, popularized summaries as well as more comprehensive versions of the reviews.*

b) Please suggest any additional features to be included on the LINKED brokerage platform